



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/754,687	01/03/2001	Karla M. Robotti	10991975-1	2886

7590 10/23/2003

AGILENT TECHNOLOGIES
Legal Department, 51U-PD
Intellectual Property Administration
P.O. Box 58043
Santa Clara, CA 95052-8043

EXAMINER

GORDON, BRIAN R

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

1743

DATE MAILED: 10/23/2003

6

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application N .

09/754,687

Applicant(s)

ROBOTTI ET AL.

Examiner

Brian R. Gordon

Art Unit

1743

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 18 August 2003.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 03 January 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____ 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Oath/Declaration

1. The new oath or declaration submitted on August 18, 2003 has been received and made of record.

Specification

2. The lengthy specification has not been checked to the extent necessary to determine the presence of all possible minor errors. Applicant's cooperation is requested in correcting any errors of which applicant may become aware in the specification.

Response to Arguments

3. Applicant's arguments filed August 18, 2003 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant asserts that Nelson et al. nor Balch et al. do not teach a method in which at least one component is allowed to pass through a phase reversible material while the remaining components of the sample remain outside. The examiner respectfully disagrees. Nelson et al. teaches a method using the device. "In using this enrichment channel, sample is introduced through sample inlet 7 in the direction of flow path 12. As sample moves through channel 10, **the analyte comprising fraction is retained on reverse phase material 2** while the remaining waste fraction of the sample flows out waste outlet 6 along flow path 13" (column 9, lines 59-62). The examiner asserts that material remaining on the reverse phase material constitutes outside. Furthermore, Balch discloses: "Of

Art Unit: 1743

particular interest as electrophoretic media are cellulose derivatives, polyacrylamides, polyvinyl alcohols, **polyethylene oxides**, and the like.". Applicant specification (pages 8-9) teaches that polyethylene oxides are suitable gels for separating materials. Nelson et al. employs the same material for the same purpose as applicant's invention as such it is inherent that the gel would function as claimed by applicant.

Balch et al. teaches "electrophoresis systems are typically comprised of a sieving matrix (i.e., **polyacrylamide gel**) sandwiched between two plates of glass (column 2 lines 62-64). Applicant specification (pages 8-9) teaches that polyethylene oxides are suitable gels for separating materials. Balch et al. employs the same material for the same purpose as applicant's invention as such it is inherent that the gel would function as claimed by applicant.

For reasons given above the previous 102 and 103 rejections of paper no. 3 are hereby maintained.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

5. Claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Balch et al. US 5,746,901.

Balch et al. disclose a hybrid slab-microchannel gel electrophoresis system and the advantages of using thinner gels.

The advantages of thinner gels in allowing high-speed separations of DNA from sequencing reactions has recently been demonstrated by several groups using gel-filled capillary electrophoresis. In gel capillary electrophoresis the separation is typically done in a 50-100 μm internal diameter quartz capillary which has much improved thermal dissipation over thicker slab gels. For example, using a 50 μm i.d. capillary (**flow path**) operated at an electric field of 200 V/cm, there has been demonstrated a ten-fold reduction in separation time of a DNA sample compared to the separation time required for the same sample using the ABI 373 DNA sequencer operated with a 400 μm thick slab gel and run with a 30-37.5 V/cm applied electric field. Efforts to develop high-speed, high throughput automated DNA sequencers by combining many small diameter quartz capillaries (e.g. 10-100) have experienced many mechanical and electrical problems concerned with: 1) filling multiple capillaries with equally high quality gel (**phase reversible material**); 2) loading the DNA samples into separate capillaries; (**introducing multi-component sample into microfluidic device having a flow path**) and 3) devising a sensitive optical detection system to measure the output fluorescence signals from all the very small capillaries. Other major factors limiting resolution of DNA fragments by electrophoresis include sample quality, sample loading on to the gel, and diffusion (separation of multi-component sample) of DNA through the gel prior to the time of detection. Recent progress in using pumpable low viscosity

Art Unit: 1743

polymer sieving media may greatly reduce the problems of filling multiple capillaries systems.

The invention utilizes an electrically insulated or high resistance, high thermal conductivity substrates to support and encompass microgels used for electrophoretic separations.

Electrophoresis systems are typically comprised of a sieving matrix (i.e., polyacrylamide gel) sandwiched between two plates of glass. An electric field is applied **(applying stimulus to change temperature)** across the device thus providing the force necessary to separate molecules based upon their mobility in the sieving medium. These plates are usually used repeatedly with only the sieving matrix being replaced between runs. Thus, one of the two plates of glass of a typical electrophoresis system would be provided with microchannels formed therein, thereby increasing the number of lanes on a single substrate or plate.

Particular, Balch teaches a hybrid gel electrophoresis device and involves the use of slab gel and microchannel gel. The device permits the fabrication of isolated microchannels for biomolecule separations without imposing the constraint of a totally sealed system. This device is reusable and ultimately much simpler and less costly to manufacture than a closed channel plate system. This device can be used for separation and detection of a large class of biomolecules such as DNA fragments, DNA sequencing ladders and proteins. The invention involves a cost effective method of fabricating multiple use microchannel gel electrophoresis plates. Gel electrophoresis of

biomolecules and DNA fragments have commercial application in research, forensics, and clinical diagnostics.

The microchannels are filled with a thin electrophoresis gel. The top plate of the device is of an optical quality that will, for example, transmit the laser-induced fluorescence of the fluorochrome labeled DNA fragments onto a sensitive optical detector.

Biomolecules are loaded into the microchannels (e.g. 50-400 micrometer deep) and are separated as they migrate down the channel.

6. Claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Nelson et al. US 5,770,029.

Nelson et al. disclose integrated electrophoretic microdevices comprising at least an enrichment channel and a main electrophoretic flowpath that includes gel separation media.

Electrophoretic gel media may also be employed as enrichment means in the subject applications. Gel media providing for a diversity of different sieving capabilities are known. By varying the pore size of the media, employing two or more gel media of different porosity, and/or providing for a pore size gradient and selecting the appropriate relationship between the enrichment channel and the main electrophoretic flowpath, one can ensure that only the analyte comprising fraction of interest of the initial sample enters the main electrophoretic flowpath. For example, one could have a device comprising an enrichment channel that intersects the main electrophoretic channel, where the enrichment channel comprises, in the direction of sample flow, a stacking gel

of large porosity and a second gel of fine porosity, where the boundary between the gels occurs in the intersection of the enrichment channel and the main electrophoretic flowpath. In this embodiment, after sample is introduced into the stacking gel and an electric field applied to the gels in the enrichment channel, the sample components move through the stacking gel and condense into a narrow band at the gel interface in the intersection of the enrichment channel and main electrophoretic flowpath. A second electric field can then be applied to the main electrophoretic flowpath so that the narrow band of the enriched sample fraction moves into and through the main electrophoretic flowpath. Alternatively, the enrichment channel could comprise a gel of gradient porosity. In this embodiment, when the band(s) of interest reaches the intersection of the enrichment channel and electrophoretic flowpath, the band(s) of interest can then be moved into and along the main electrophoretic flowpath.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.

4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.
9. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).
10. Claims 17-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Balch et al or Nelson et al.

Although it is not specifically recited that instructions are provided on a substrate, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in art at the time of the invention to provide instructions or operational manuals that would explain to one that may desire to use the device to perform experimental procedures. It is also commonly known that manuals may be provided in the form of paper or electronic floppies or compact disks.

Conclusion

1. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.
Nakaya et al. disclose liquid transport systems.
2. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).


A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Brian R. Gordon whose telephone number is (703) 305-0399. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, with 2nd and 4th F off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jill Warden can be reached on 703-308-4037. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9310 for regular communications and (703) 872-9311 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.

brg
October 9, 2003


Jill Warden
Supervisory Patent Examiner
Technology Center 1700